



State Need Grant

Background

Established in 1969, the State Need Grant (SNG) program helps the state's lowest-income undergraduate students pursue degrees, hone skills, or retrain for new careers. Even with state-supported tuition at public colleges and universities, and with federal and state financial aid, thousands of low-income Washington families do not have enough resources to pay the costs of a college education.¹

While rising college costs affect students from all income levels, the lowest-income students are particularly vulnerable. They are less likely to enroll, and more likely to drop out than their more advantaged peers, if financial aid does not offset cost increases.

National and Washington State research shows that low-income students can enroll and persist to program completion only if sufficient financial aid – in an appropriate mix of grants, part-time work, and student loans – is available.²

Program Overview

State Need Grants are designed to pay a portion of educational costs for students with significant financial need. Students can use the grants at participating public and independent colleges and universities, community and technical colleges, and private career schools in Washington State.

The Higher Education Coordinating Board administers the program. Working on the Board's behalf, schools identify and make awards to eligible students. Funds come primarily from the state, with federal matching funds representing less than 2 percent of the total.

Students are ranked for eligibility according to family income, once overall financial need has been established using the federal methodology. The effective income cutoff and grant amounts are based on available funding and the number of eligible enrolling students.

¹According to cost guidelines adopted by the Washington Financial Aid Association, tuition, books, and living expenses cost an estimated \$12,000 at a community/technical college, and \$14,000 at a public baccalaureate institution during the 2003-2004 academic year.

²“Student Financial Aid and the Persistence of Recipients at Washington Colleges and Universities,” JBL Associates under contract with the Higher Education Coordinating Board, 1996.

Program Eligibility

To be eligible for State Need Grants, students must meet the following criteria:

- Have demonstrated financial need based on a completed “FAFSA” – Free Application for Federal Student Aid;
- Be a Washington state resident;
- Be enrolled as an undergraduate at least half-time in an eligible program;
- Be making satisfactory progress in their programs; and
- Be pursuing a certificate, baccalaureate degree, or first associate degree.

Students may receive State Need Grants for up to five years (10 semesters/15 quarters) and 125 percent of the published length of their programs. In addition, they can earn a second associate degree if five years have elapsed since the first.

The Student Recipients

In fiscal year 2004, the program will use about \$112 million in state money, and \$2 million in federal matching funds, to help about 53,500 students go to college. State Need Grant awards for full-time students range from about \$2,050 to over \$4,300 per year, depending on costs.

To be eligible, a student’s family income cannot exceed 55 percent of the state’s median family income, about \$36,500 for a family of four.

In 2002-2003, the average family income for dependent students was about \$22,400. For self-supporting students, it was about \$12,100. Most students, however, had family incomes significantly below the cutoff.

Maximum Grant Amounts by Type of Institution (Fiscal Year 2004)

Community and technical colleges	\$2,062
Private career colleges	\$2,062
Public comprehensive universities	\$3,237
Public research universities	\$4,081
Independent universities	\$4,315